



Golf green renovation post lockdown

For any turf and training related queries, talk to the team at NZ Sports Turf Institute.

Many golf clubs will have missed their planned autumn renovations because of the lock down. Primarily we are talking about greens, but it could also include tees and fairways. Essential maintenance such as mowing, re-commenced 17 days after the lockdown started, but realistically no significant renovation will be able to be done until we return to Level 2 status. Hence, we expect that it will simply be too late for a majority of planned autumn renovations.

What should golf clubs do about this?

Our advice is to NOT RENOVATE this autumn and importantly, do not worry about it. There are a couple of compelling reasons to avoid renovation at this time, namely:

1. It will be late autumn by the time we get back to Level 2 and in so in most of NZ it will simply be too late to schedule a renovation, i.e. it is already too cold or in the warmer regions the risk of inadequate recovery before winter is high.
2. Golfers will be itching to play - they have missed out on a lot of golf and it would be terrible to further disrupt golf in the short term.



What are the implications of missing a renovation?

In practice, on well maintained golf courses, missing a renovation won't have a big impact because of the good work done in the past.

These days most NZ golf greens have good rootzones because of suitable renovations (coring, etc.) and sand topdressing programmes that have been consistently implemented for the last 10 plus years. You just don't see many thatch dominated and severely layered rootzones on sand (or most soil) greens anymore.

View the good work done as an investment that you can easily live off for at least the next six months.

Also think of it as not being too dissimilar to your club hosting an important event in the coming spring - it would be normal to not renovate the greens in the prior autumn.

What can be done to compensate for the missing renovation?

In practice, one of the major benefits of renovation (e.g. coring followed by sand backfilling) is that it inevitably deposits a 2 to 3mm sand layer on the greens. This is more than you can get on at other times. These large amounts of sand top dressing that accompany renovation are arguably the biggest benefit of renovation, especially if the rootzone is already in good condition.

Getting more than the normal sand top dressing amounts on over the coming weeks will allow you to compensate to some extent for missing out on renovation. The key proviso is that you have sufficient time after sanding before growth stops.

Consequently, in the cooler regions, lighter applications will be required due to the slower and shorter period of remaining growth.



If you still remain at a slightly higher than normal height of cut post lock down it will present an opportunity to get more sand on than normal. Therefore, as soon as possible apply a heavier than normal sand topdressing; work this into the canopy making sure that you don't bury too many leaves and follow that up with additional sand as conditions allow. But be careful – don't over do it and avoid damage through over zealous brushing.

Sand top dressing amounts. Roughly, on a per hectare basis:

- 10m³ = a 1mm layer of sand
- 20m³ = a 2mm layer of sand
- 30m³ = a 3mm layer of sand



Other renovation considerations

1. **Aeration treatments**

Renovation improves aeration and drainage of the rootzone. In its absence, schedule small (<10mm diameter) solid tine treatments during autumn and winter. These will aid drainage and aeration and when followed by ironing, will not significantly disrupt play.

2. **Restoring turf cover**

Renovation is often a time where bare or weak areas are restored with reseeding. In the absence of coring, poorer results are likely. Consequently, the following are recommended:

Completely bare areas

Repair these with plugging, ideally from your nursery. If you don't have a turf nursery, take plugs from the back of the green and then reseed this area.

Thin areas

On thin areas and where there are sufficient plants present to cover the area - make use of what you have and for the remainder of autumn spot fertilise these areas every 7 – 10 days. If you achieve the full growth potential it is possible to restore full cover in these areas.

3. **Weed control**

If you were planning to control large patches of weeds such as Hydrocotyle as part of an autumn renovation, our advice now is don't! If done too late you risk bare ground over winter. It would simply be best to live with these weeds for the next few months and start control programmes during spring.

4. **Moss Suppression**

For most regions the normal moss control programmes can continue to be undertaken provided that there is active growth.